

**Andover School Committee**  
**Minutes of Thursday, February 4, 2021**  
**Virtual Meeting**

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**Participants from the School Committee:** Chair Shannon Scully, Vice-Chair, Susan McCready, Tracey Spruce, Paul Murphy, and Lauren Conoscenti.

**Others participating:** Interim Superintendent Dr. Claudia Bach, Assistant Superintendent Sandra Trach, Assistant Superintendent Sara Stetson, Chief Operating Officer Stephen Nembirkow, Director of Innovation Stephen Chinosi, Human Resources Director Jessica Porter.

**I. Regular Meeting**

**Call to Order/Moment of Silence**

Chairperson Scully called the Andover School Committee meeting of February 4, 2021 to order at 7:00 PM and opened up the Regular Meeting through a Virtual Meeting Broadcast by Andover TV on Comcast Channel 99, Verizon Channel 43 or via streamed: [www.andovertv.org](http://www.andovertv.org). **Public**

**Participation via email: [scremote@andoverma.us](mailto:scremote@andoverma.us)**

The meeting began with a Moment of Silence with a reflection for Tia Pittounicos who was a third-grade teacher at Bancroft Elementary School and who passed away today. The School Committee and School Administration are very saddened about the loss of Tia.

Shannon reported that the Interim Superintendent Goals will be delayed until the next SC Meeting on February 25<sup>th</sup>.

**A. Recognitions/Communications**

Dr. Bach spent a good bit of time today with the Bancroft Faculty as they were most concerned about their students and having them close at hand, particularly the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Team and the Kindergarten Team who Tia Pittounicos began the year with.

Tracey Spruce spoke about the West El/Shawsheen Pre-School Building Project Meeting held last night. They reviewed the estimates that had been reconciled and spoke about the cost for the next steps in the program; the community's portion is expected to be around \$115M. The Committee voted on several value engineering items which reduced the cost of the project by about \$400,000. The presentation is available on the APS website.

Susan McCready reported that a Community Forum for the West El/Shawsheen Building Project will be held on Wednesday, February 10<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM that will include a review of the schematic design with newer images, discussion on finances, impact to taxpayers, as well as the timeline. There will be an opportunity for question and comment.

An Informal School Committee Forum is scheduled for Tuesday, February 9<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM. Lauren Conoscenti said there is a zoom registration link on the SC page on the APS website.

Paul Murphy reported SEPAC will be holding a meeting on Thursday, February 11<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 AM. Parents can register to attend the meeting at [andoversepac@gmail.com](mailto:andoversepac@gmail.com).

Shannon provided an update on the letter the School Committee sent to Governor Baker and Jeff Riley, Commissioner of Education, on in-person learning. Yesterday, Shannon, Claudia, and Sandy had a discussion with Barry Finegold and Jeff Riley and several members of DESE on the challenges of returning students to in-person learning under DESE's guidelines and how they are impacting Andover students returning to the classroom. They talked specifically around the requirements for lunch, including the 6' spacing combined with the placing of desks in a classroom. Shannon is hopeful that they will reflect on the information shared during the call.

## **B. Public Input**

Jennifer Kelber: Understands that the decisions made are challenging ones, but our children are suffering academically and socially. There is no replacement for in-person learning and our elementary children are the ones most in need of in-person learning. She understood the need to close schools last spring, but now the data is in and concludes that the schools are safe. She understands that hurdles exist, but it is time to get creative and find answers. Lunch time is proving to be a difficult challenge, but one that can be overcome. She is confident that we can come to a conclusion that works to allow the children to return to school five days a week. Parents would like to receive clear communications and who is making the decisions. She would like to see a concrete plan and action.

Thad Palmer: Has there been a survey on in-person options to see who would be interested in a full-time in-person option? If a survey is in development, can you commit to a timeline. If there is not one planned yet, please explain why. What was DESE's reaction that the lunch period is a deterrent to going back to in-person learning? What are your plans for offering more broader communications to the APS Community?

## **C. Response to Public Input**

Dr. Bach will respond to public input in the next topic on Hybrid and Remote Learning. Regarding Mr. Palmer's question about communication opportunities, Tracey Spruce said there is a SC Informal Forum on Tuesday night at 7:00 PM, the registration link was emailed to families this week, or you can register on the SC page on the APS website. Claudia has been attending PAC/PTO Meetings, Town Wide PTO Meetings, and ACE meetings engaging in conversation with people on a return to in-school learning and she will be setting up Google Meets where people can have a give and take discussion. She will be meeting with AHS students for their input and is eager to hear how this year has gone with them and will bring their suggestions back to the Team. She appreciates Mr. Palmer's comments.

In response to Jennifer's comments, Claudia appreciates her suggestions and shares her concerns about how difficult this year has been and that we won't know for a while about the mental health problems that have developed. She held off on sending out the family survey in January as they were waiting for information from parents on changing instructional models. Next week they will be meeting in two teams to look at how we can be more creative. We hope DESE can bring some science to us to make us feel more comfortable about transporting students and the 6' distancing and hopes we can begin implementing the ideas we have right now.

## **D. Education**

### **1. Update on Hybrid and Remote Learning**

Sandy Trach thanked everyone who has sent in a communication. We agree that this sustained need to be in a hybrid/remote model has had dramatic effects on our students, faculty and families. In-person learning is the optimal learning model for our students and our chief goal is to help return our students to in-person learning in a responsible way. Our immediate focus has been on our youngest students and strategic planning has been underway for them return to in-person learning as soon as possible in a timely and safe way. We are focused on overcoming the barriers set by DESE as regulatory guidance or restrictions, which we are required to uphold. These metrics, combined with DESE's required configurations, leads to significant space restraints specifically with bussing, classrooms and unmasked meal times.

Lunch is a significant issue but not the only issue. The specific seating configurations, considered allowable in an un-masked situation by DESE, is restrictive in making space. Every space, schedule, and staffing option was and continues to be considered for meals coupled with the appropriate staff to supervise students. Andover will actively use outdoor space as soon as practical, weather permitting, and they will continue to explore every safety option allowable by DESE. In terms of learning and meals in various spaces including hallways, there is no question learning may break out into hallways, but not meals. Busses have been reduced to 32% capacity under DESE Guidelines along with the required seating specifications, it's possible bus guidelines may be reconfigured to allow more seating.

We are passionate about having our students back in school and applying our full efforts towards this goal and committed to applying updates regularly. Sandy welcomes parents and teachers to email her directly.

Sara Stetson spoke about the capacity issues within Cohort C. In the late summer, they created a hierarchy for prioritizing students with the most critical need and continually look at the criteria and update it as children's needs change and they are reevaluated. They are bringing tiers of children who have been less engaged into the mix to provide more in-person support. They just completed a third review of all of the different courses offered at AHS to see if they could add more students, and are looking at the assessments of our youngest learners and how they are doing with their literacy supports.

Lauren Conoscenti: Many parents have written in about having parent volunteers in the schools which they were not able to do this fall. Has that changed at all? Sandy said this is under review from a health and safety perspective by their team but they are restricted due to the chance of transmission. Lauren asked if they can alternate Cohort A and B coming in on Wednesdays every other week. Claudia said they learned from the principals that it is very complicated because Professional Development for teachers was moved to Wednesday so not to disrupt Cohort B on Fridays.

Paul Murphy explicitly said that there has been no change in DESE Guidelines since August 2020. So, when we are being told there is low transmission and asked why aren't we listening and changing the guidelines, people need to lobby DESE to change the guidelines. The success in low transmission is a success. We need to find out the data on the scope of our problem in

Andover. We also need to find out which families plan to stay with remote learning and which families are comfortable having their students back in school.

The SC has received a lot of emails with public suggestions. Susan reported on the email questions asking when will we get to the point when we can talk through returning to school in more detail. When and how can we give parents a little more sense that we have investigated a number of these suggestions, and will there be an opportunity to clearly communicate to them the challenges we are facing and the work that has been going on? Dr. Bach agreed that parents need to hear very specifically about some of our very detailed plans.

## 2. Update on Professional Development

Director of Strategic Innovation, Steve Chinosi provided an update on the Professional Development (PD) offered to Andover teachers. Using the new platform, Schoology, allows teachers to go to one place for information which is effectively organized. The second critical piece is what COVID closure has done to the Education Community. The interactive choice boards are a strategic move for teachers to use a radical approach to engage with kids.

For the first three months of school the first order of work was to get everyone ready, the last three months have been about achievements, standards, content work, skillsets, etc. Every PD day has ended with an exit ticket for teachers to rate their own learning. There was a steady positive increase in the responses from November through January. The work that staff does on the PD days is quite inspiring. Teachers want PD that allows them to collaborate and speak honestly, creating a professional culture and practical PD that makes them better teachers. Instructional Assistants are essential and critical parts of the classroom who help support the classroom instruction and students.

## 3. Update on Nursing and Health

Rita Casper, Director of Nursing, and Tom Carbone, Director of Public Health in Andover provided an update on Covid. A survey has been sent out to parents and staff about the possibility of pool testing. Pool testing is a complicated process to initiate and an endeavor that requires a tremendous amount of resources. In order to have a program that is effective enough, we have to have a high number of individuals that are interested.

Although our Covid numbers have been low, we are seeing a slight increase. As we come upon February vacation, Rita asked that anyone traveling let the nurses in their school know. Tom Carbone said that state-wide, and within the community, the numbers have been trending in the 'good' direction; however, they are concerned with the uptick they are seeing this week.

Mr. Carbone reported that the Governor moved us into Phase 2 of the vaccine roll out this week, except the vaccine is not here yet. Currently, they are completing their Phase One vaccinations for Public Safety and Town employees who enter homes to service our seniors. We have been told by the State that we cannot expect to have more than 100 vaccines per week, but Tom is confident that over the next month we will see an increase in the availability of the vaccine and other avenues where you can get the vaccine.

## 4. Program of Studies

Director of Guidance Aixa de Kelley and the Program Coordinators presented information on the new courses being offered in the AHS Program of Studies for the 2021-2022 School Year.

The Program of Studies will be posted on the AHS Website upon approval by the School Committee.

Susan McCready moved to approve the Program of Studies as presented. The motion was seconded by Tracey Spruce. Roll call: T. Spruce-Y, P. Murphy-Y, L. Conoscenti-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

**5. Field Trips: WMS Students to Ecuador (Quito and Galapagos Islands) February 2022**

WMS faculty member, Lauren Hayes, with the support of Principal, Tim Corkery, would like to provide an opportunity for approximately 20-30 students enrolled in an 8<sup>th</sup> grade Spanish course to travel to Ecuador through World Strides. The trip would be an 8-day tour running through February vacation week and contingent on the global pandemic. Travel will not be permitted unless the CDC Travel Advisory is down to a 1 or 2 stage.

Lauren Conoscenti moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the proposed extracurricular trip for West Middle School Students to Ecuador on February 18-25, 2022 as presented and in accordance with the provisions set forth in the Andover School Committee Policy entitled "APS School-Sponsored Trip and Student Travel Policy". Motion seconded by Paul Murphy. Roll call: L. Conoscenti-Y, P. Murphy-Y, T. Spruce-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

**6. Continuing Business**

1. Interim Superintendent Goals / Rescheduled to February 25, 2021
2. Superintendent Search

Shannon Scully shared an update on the Superintendent Search and Jessica Porter provided a draft of the form for the Selection Committee. The importance of having a sub-committee is that the work is done in Executive Session so names are not publicly shared. By not having the full School Committee participate in the Screening Committee, it maintains that confidentiality.

The Committee discussed the composition of the Search Committee. Jess Porter said the proposed list they have put together totals 11 people which is an appropriate number. The candidates will be chosen by the Screening Committee (with Ray & Associates conducting the initial screening of candidates) and then moving 2-3 candidates forward to the School Committee for public interviews.

The proposed composition of the Screening Committee would include: 2 members of the School Committee, 1 Central Office Administrator (COO), 1 Program Coordinator, 1 Director, 1 Principal, 1 Teacher, 1 Town Manager, 1 person from Facilities, and 2 Community Members (1 a parent and 1 who is not a parent) for screening candidates recommended by Ray & Associates. The Committee discussed the parameters of the composition of the Screening Committee and the proposed application.

Jess Porter will take the lead on the coordination of the candidates with Paul Murphy representing the School Committee. The application will be on the Superintendent's Search Page. A communication will be sent out to the community.

**7. FY22 Budget Update**

Steve Nembirkow presented an update on the FY-22 Budget, Chapter 70 and other items. The House 1 Budget Chapter 70 Funds were released and APS received a 1.5% increase in funds of \$168,000 despite an enrollment drop of 112 students. The legislature and Governor Baker were true to their word about holding us harmless. The Schools will receive \$558,000 in ESSER 2 Funding and additional \$187,000 In COVID Relief Funds. Funds will be available up to 2023 for COVID relief expenses only. There may be more funds coming in from the President's Relief Package. Shannon noted that Andover is one of the 78% of districts that only received minimum aid of \$30 per student increase.

**E. Consent Agenda:**

**1. Surplus Equipment Request**

In January, a new Mobile Shelving System was installed in Student Services requiring the removal of 32 file cabinets. In accordance with Chapter 30b and Andover Town Bylaws regarding the disposal of surplus property, regardless of the means of disposal, the SC must vote a surplus property request.

Susan McCready moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the disposal of file cabinets declared as surplus property from Student Services as presented. The motion was seconded by Paul Murphy. Roll call: L. Conoscenti-Y, T. Spruce-Y, P. Murphy-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

**2. Grants/Donations to District: None**

**Minutes:** SC December 17, 2020 and Triboard Meeting Minutes of December 9, 2020. Susan McCready moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Motion seconded by Paul Murphy. Roll call: L. Conoscenti-Y, T. Spruce-Y, P. Murphy-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

**II. Adjournment**

At 10:07 P.M. Tracey Spruce moved to adjourn the School Committee Meeting of February 4, 2021. The motion was seconded by Paul Murphy. Roll call: P. Murphy-Y, L. Conoscenti-Y, T. Spruce-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Dee DeLorenzo  
Recording Secretary